

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 272148

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 272148 ACTION JIDDA INFO ADDIS ABABA
11 DEC

QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 272148

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:

SUBJECT: SAUDI INTEREST IN ETHIOPIAN DEVELOPMENTS

REFS: A) JIDDA 6932; B) STATE 259383 ,

1. REF B PROVIDES ANALYSIS OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN
ETHIOPIA ON A NOFORN BASIS. THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPHS ARE A
SANITIZED VERSION OF PARTS OF REF B SUITABLE FOR SHARING
WITH SAG. THEY ARE KEYED TO SUBJECTS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST
TO SAG AS SET FORTH IN REF A.

2. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE REPORTED TO BE IDEOLOGICAL DIFFER-
ENCES BETWEEN AMAN AND THE PROVISIONAL MILITARY COUNCIL
(PMC) THEY DO NOT SEEM TO HAVE PLAYED A ROLE IN HIS OUSTER
AND EXECUTION. THE DESIRE TO OUST HIM SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN
PRIMARILY THE RESULT OF DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ON HOW TO
HANDLE THE ERITREAN ISSUE, AMAN FAVORING NEGOTIATIONS WHILE
THE PMC WANTED TO AT LEAST STRENGTHEN THE ETHIOPIAN GOVERN-
MENT'S MILITARY POSITION. AMAN FEARED THAT ANY MILITARY
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MOVES WOULD LESSEN THE CHANCES OF INITIATING NEGOTIATIONS.

THE DECISION TO ARREST AND SUBSEQUENTLY TO KILL AMAN WAS PROBABLY THE RESULT OF FEAR, WHICH MAY OR MAY NOT HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED, THAT HE WAS PLANNING TO INCREASE HIS POWER AT THE EXPENSE OF THE PMC AND POSSIBLY TO DISBAND THE LATTER AND ARREST SOME OF ITS MEMBERS. THE PMC THEREFORE DECIDED TO PRE-EMPT.

3. THE EXECUTION OF THE HOSTAGES MAY HAVE BEEN: A) A MOVE MADE IN PANIC FROM ACUTE FEAR THAT RELATIVES OF THE DETAINED AND OTHER SUPPORTERS OF THE OLD REGIME WERE IN LEAGUE WITH AMAN'S PLANS TO MOVE AGAINST THE PMC OR B) A DELIBERATE SHOW OF FORCE AND BRUTALITY INTENDED TO COW THE POPULATION, INTIMIDATE ANY POTENTIAL PLOTTERS AGAINST THE PMC, AND ENSURE THAT NO HOSTILE ACTION EVENTUATED. IT IS DOUBTFUL THAT IT WILL BE SUCCESSFUL IN THIS PURPOSE. THE EXECUTIONS HAVE RAISED THE LEVEL OF BITTERNESS BETWEEN THE CONTENDING FORCES AND LESSENERED THE VALUE AS HOSTAGES OF THE REMAINING DETAINEES, AS CONCERN FOR THEIR SAFETY HAD BEEN AN IMPORTANT DETERRENT TO ACTION BY THEIR FRIENDS AND RELATIONS AGAINST THE PMC.

4. WHILE IDEOLOGY WAS NOT INVOLVED IN THESE EVENTS IT WAS KNOWN THAT AMAN AND SOME OF MEMBERS OF THE PMC HAD THEIR DIFFERENCES. THESE WERE NOT SO MUCH IN TERMS OF RIGHT VS. LEFT; RATHER THEY SHOULD BE CAST IN TERMS OF GRADUALISM VS EXTREMISM. AMAN WAS AGAINST SUMMARY EXECUTIONS OF ALL DETAINEES WHICH SOME PMC MEMBERS FAVORED; HE WAS ALSO SUSPECT BECAUSE, ALTHOUGH HE HAD BEEN IN DISFAVOR WITH THE HAILE SELASSIE REGIME, HE HAD MAINTAINED CONNECTIONS WITH MANY OF ITS MEMBERS. HIS DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE SCENE REMOVES AN IMPORTANT MODERATING ELEMENT AND IT IS QUITE POSSIBLE THAT THE MILITARY GOVERNMENT WILL MOVE MORE RAPIDLY AND RUTHLESSLY FORWARD TO TRIAL AND PUNISHMENT OF THE DETAINED, LAND REFORM AND MILITARY CONFRONTATION IN ERITREA THAN THEY WOULD HAVE HAD AMAN REMAINED AS NOMINAL HEAD OF GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE RECEIVED CERTAIN ASSURANCES, HOWEVER, THAT THERE WILL BE NO MORE SUMMARY EXECUTIONS AND THAT THE EMPEROR'S LIFE WILL BE SPARED.

5. THERE IS NO RPT NO INDICATION OF A CHINESE, SOVIET, OR CONFIDENTIAL

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OTHER COMMUNIST HAND IN RECENT DEVELOPMENTS.

6. DIFFERENCES OVER ERITREA ARE CITED ABOVE. THE ISSUE CAME TO A HEAD OVER THE PMC'S DECISION TO MOVE SOME ELEMENTS OF THE ADDIS-BASED 1ST DIVISION TO ERITREA WHICH AMAN OPPOSED. IT CANNOT YET CATEGORICALLY BE SAID THAT THESE TRANSFERS, WHICH ARE NOW IN FULL SWING, AUTOMATICALLY MEAN OFFENSIVE ACTION BY THE ETHIOPIAN ARMY

AGAINST THE INSURGENTS. BUT THEY CERTAINLY WILL INCREASE
THE GOVERNMENT'S MILITARY CAPABILITY IN THE NORTH AND
POSSIBLY PROVOKE PRE-EMPTIVE ACTIONS BY THE INSURGENTS. INGERSOLL
UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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